

Citizens Advisory Committee for Mayor-Council Transition

CAC Purpose and Intent:

- * To assist and inform the City Council, Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, and City Consultants throughout the transition process to a strong mayor form of government*
- * To serve as a conduit between San Diego communities and City Hall throughout the transition process*

Agenda

**Friday, July 8, 2005
11:30am -- 1:00pm
7th floor conference room
of the City Administration Building**

Item-1: Minutes of CAC Meetings

Item-2: Rand report (see press release below and www.rand.org for full report)

Item-3: CAC role regarding the Mayor's office

Item-4: Preparation of CAC reports for 7/14 & 7/21 Council Committee meetings

Item-5: Additional business

Rand Corp. News Release

FOR RELEASE Wednesday July 6, 2005

RAND REPORT CAUTIONS TRANSITION OF SAN DIEGO GOVERNMENT MOVING TOO SLOWLY

Too little progress has been made toward reorganizing San Diego city government in advance of the city's Jan. 1 shift to a new form of government that will vest expanded powers in its mayor, according to a RAND Corporation study issued today.

The city, which moves from a council-manager to a mayor-council form of government on Jan. 1, should appoint a transition manager to improve coordination as administrative duties migrate from the city manager to the mayor, according to the report.

This manager should focus on eight to 10 key governmental processes — such as creating the mechanism for a mayoral veto — that must be developed by the end of the year, seeking input from city staff and the City Council to make sure solutions will work.

In addition, the city should go ahead and hire a consultant it has identified to help retool operation of the mayor's office, according to the researchers.

City leaders should focus immediate attention on resolving substantive issues and leave other details — such as whether to expand the size of the City Council — to an elected Charter Review Commission that could be established after the transition occurs.

"Conflicts are inevitable as city leaders interpret and implement the changes made to the city's governing charter," said [Kevin McCarthy](#), a RAND senior researcher and lead author of the study. "But we believe there are steps that can be taken to smooth the transition and place the city on the path toward stable governance in the future."

McCarthy and co-author Rae Archibald examined the experiences of other cities that have switched to the mayor-council system, evaluated San Diego's current municipal challenges and compiled a series of recommendations for transforming the city's government.

In addition to the governmental transition, the city of San Diego faces serious fiscal problems and the current mayor has announced he will step down July 15. A new mayor may not be elected until November.

Given the city's financial problems, RAND researchers suggest that city leaders try to reallocate resources rather than spending additional funds on the transition and new units that must be created. For example, the City Council should reduce the size of its individual staffs and put the savings into staffing new budget and legislative analysts' offices.

The RAND report outlines a number of recommendations involving both the Mayor and City Council. The recommendations for the mayor include:

- A new mayor should establish an office of constituent services with an ombudsman to handle complaints from the public and screen requests for new services.
- City leaders should resolve the mayor's role in city redevelopment policies. Under the revised city charter, the mayor no longer has an automatic role. But mayoral involvement is crucial since redevelopment is a central part of the city's economical and social policies.
- A new mayor must decide how to best provide the city with clear political leadership and whether to merge or separate the mayor's policy and management duties when organizing his or her staff.

"Ultimately, a mayor's success under the new system will depend more on leadership skills and the use of the 'soft powers' of the office, rather than on the exercise of formal power," McCarthy said. "Reaching out to the community, being accessible to the public and an openness to suggestions are all critical ingredients of such leadership."

RAND recommendations involving the City Council include:

- The City Council should vest its new presiding officer with strong powers for a two-year term. The new presiding officer (the Mayor will no longer be a part of the council) should have the power to enforce Council rules, appoint members to committees and manage the Council docket.
- The function of the City Council's finance and rules committees should not be merged together because such a move would vest too much power in a small group.
- The new budget analyst's office should play a key role in supporting the City Council's oversight role. Its duties should include identifying how a mayor's budget supports the city's key policy initiatives and how the mayor's priorities compare with the Council's priorities.
- The City Council must improve its relations with the City Attorney.

The RAND report cautions that San Diego's transition to a mayor-council form of government will be an on-going effort that will require changes in government long after the Jan. 1, 2006 start of the mayor-council system.

The public will be best served if city leaders focus on long-term improvement of the city's government — instead of short-term political goals — and work to make the transition as transparent and inclusive as possible, according to researchers.

Under the council-manager form of government, policy is set by the elected mayor and city council, but city departments are supervised by a city manager. Under the mayor-council system, the mayor is the city's top administrator with responsibility for the daily operation of city services.

The RAND study was commissioned by the Better Government Association of San Diego, a group of group of business leaders that was among the supporters of a successful November 2004 ballot initiative that approved the shift.

The study was done by the [RAND Infrastructure, Safety and Environment](#) unit. The unit's mission is to improve development, operation, use, and protection of society's essential built and natural assets; and to enhance the related social assets of safety and security of individuals in transit and in their workplaces and communities.